

Remarks

Claims 1-13 and 15-21 are currently pending. Reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested in light of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

The drawings have been amended to show the sheath or shield 50. The specification has been updated to show this reference numeral. The sheath or shield 50 is further described in presently incorporated U.S. Patent No. 5,674,296 and no new matter has been added.

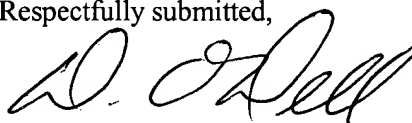
With respect to the rejections over the prior art, Applicant respectfully directs the Examiner's attention to the priority date for the present application. The present application is based from a PCT application filed July 22, 1999, which further claims priority to a provisional application filed July 22, 1998.

The Graf patent (USP 6,419,706) was a French priority date of December 19, 1997 and a PCT filing date of December 18, 1998. In the U.S., the effective priority date for the Graf patent is the latter December 18, 1998 date, which is after the effective priority date (July 22, 1998) of the present application. (Although not pertinent to the present discussion, it is further noted that both the Graf patent and the present application have been assigned to the same SDGI Holdings, Inc.)

Claims 2, 3 and 7 have been further amended to be allowable over all the cited references, regardless of whether they are prior art.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the numbers provided below if further consideration is required. Also, Deposit Account No. 08-1394 may be used for any over or under payments.

Respectfully submitted,

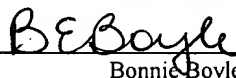


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on June 9, 2003


Bonnie Boyle